

To our Buddhist Friends of India - Greetings from Sri Lanka

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

The full moon day of the month of Vaisakha, more than twenty-five centuries ago, marked the birth of Prince Siddhartha into this world at Lumbini. Thirty-five years later, it also ushered in his enlightenment as Sammā Sambuddha at Bodhgaya. He has now come to be known and accepted by all schools of Buddhism as Sakyamuni, the eternal Buddha. Both these events of birth and enlightenment took place in Jambudvīpa, i.e. the subcontinent of India.

Having completed a very small tour of India, visiting Rājagūha, Nālanadā and Pāṭalīputra among others, along the roadways obviously trodden by the Great Master himself in his day, I sincerely feel a deep sense of joy in expressing our indebtedness to India for this great gift to the world of this teacher of gods and men - *satthā devamanussānaṃ*.

We are proud that the archaeological remains of India preserve, much more than what is in words, in the preserved works of art, the glory that was once in India in the presence of Buddhism in the land. Kanheri caves in the vicinity of Mumbai preserve in the exquisite imagery of the Buddha, the benevolence which Buddhism offered to the world. I personally had, on beholding them, a deep sense of communion with the Buddha as the Great symbol of Compassion - *Mahā Kāruṇiko Nātho*.

I also had the good fortune of seeing the glory that was once Ajanta and Ellora. In the days when computers were not known, these rock cut caves have turned out to be the best hard discs in which the balmy messages of Buddhism have been indelibly carved,

Even more recent works of Buddhist art, like the 17 meter Buddha statue in the Lumbini Park in Hyderabad are a living testimony to the veneration in which India adores the Buddha and his Dhamma. As fellow disciples who share the same teachings of the Buddha, we are legitimately proud of this glorification of Buddhism in India, in the land of its birth.

It is with a very great sense of appreciation and an awareness of our indebtedness to India that we send to all our Buddhist friends in India our very sincere good wishes for their personal well-being of good health and prosperity, and for social harmony among its people. We also wish for more and more glorification of the religion of the Buddha in his own native land.

International Buddhist Research and Information Center
380 / 9 Sarana Road
Colombo 7
Sri Lanka



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Buddhism as a new system of religious and philosophical thinking.

The origin of Buddhism goes back to the enlightenment of Gotama the Buddha, and that to the sixth century B.C. This event, in the history of world religions, antedates Christianity by 500 years and Islam by yet another 500 years i.e. a total of 1000 years.

Siddhartha, as the future Buddha was called in his childhood, was born as a son of man, as son of Queen Maya. He was not a son of God. His father was obviously a provincial ruler on the Himalayan slopes, and belonged to an

agrarian family, as the name of his father Suddhodana and those of his uncles Dhotodana and Amitodana imply.

Needless to say, he was born into an Indian family, inheriting the vastness of Indian beliefs of the day. In the background, there already existed the thinking of the Vedas, Brahmanas and even the Upanishads which came under the Brahmanic tradition.. Therewas also in existence an extensive world-renouncing Sramana tradition, exerting considerable influence on the lives of the people.

Semi-historical anecdotes connected with his birth say that soon after his birth, Siddhartha was shown to a Brahmin sage associated with the family, named Asita or Kāladeva, who pronounced that he would grow up to end up finally as a Fully Enlightened Being.

It would not be incorrect to say that he was born a Hindu. But it would be grossly incorrect to say, as Professor Radhakrishnan does, that he was born a Hindu, lived a Hindu and died a Hindu. This is a serious error of judgement. In his new teachings to the world, Gotama as the Fully Enlightened Buddha, repudiated and challenged many basic teachings of what could be called the current Indian religion of his day [We are doubtful whether we could accurately call that system of Indian beliefs of the Buddha's day by the name of Hinduism.].

He basically rejected the belief in a **Primary Divine Source of Power in the World**, call it Brahma or Issara [or God], to whom the worldlings could adress themselves for protection, assistance and spiritual refuge [*attāno loka*]. He also rejcted the existence of such a being who directed and guided the destiny of the world and the beings therein, punishing them or taking revenge from them [*anabhissaro*]. In doing so in his teachings to the world, **he shifted the accent from the divine to the human**, both for success and security in this life as well as for assurance of emancipation or deliverance from the ills of samsaric existence.

He also rejected in no uncertain terms the idea of **an eternal unchanging soul within man** [termed *ātman* and ultimately related to the primary source of the

world called *Brahman*]. Hence the fundamental Buddhist theory of *anatta* or no-soul. It is with such a brave challenge of the existing normal patterns of religious beliefs that the Buddha ushered in a new era of religious thinking in the sixth century B.C.. It is with a clear awareness of these that one should venture to assess the role of Buddhism as a world religion.

Pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka.

Chronicle histories of Sri Lanka, the **Dīpavamsa** and the **Mahāvamsa**, refer to the island as being peopled by very primitive inhabitants. Their descriptions relate them, more or less, to a stone age culture. They are referred to as living on raw meat [*lohita-bhakkhā*], not familiar with the use of fire. They are named ***Yakkhā***.

During the life time of the Buddha, he is said to have visited the island three times. During one of these visits, he is said to have admonished a ruling family of a higher social order called ***Nāga*** who were battling for the right of kingship in a particular locality of the island.

Legendarily it is claimed that the Buddha sanctified several places in the island by his visits to them and by leaving behind mementos like his foot print on the Mount Samanala, and a miniature stupa in Mahiyangana, enshrining some hair relics given by him to a local divinity.

Mahavamsa also records that the Buddha hinted that the inhabitants of Sri Lanka should be culturally much more advanced for the reception of Buddhism. He is supposed to have said that Sri Lanka should be rid of the ***Yakkhas - Yakkhā nibbāsiyā idha***.

This pre-historic period in Sri Lanka, from the time of the Buddha to the arrival of Mahinda also witnesses many demonic cults and primitive religious beliefs in the land. There seems to have been a popular **God of the Hunt** who went by the name of **Vyādha-Deva**.

Legends would have us believe that a powerful **Yakkha Queen** by the name **Kuvenī** ruled over some part of the island during this period.

In India - Prior to the Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Many things happened in India after the passing away of the Buddha. Three Buddhist councils were held under the patronage of distinguished monks of the Sāsana [Order], together with the support of the kings of the time. Within a few months of the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha, the First Buddhist Council [*paṭhama saṅgīti*] was held under the presidentship of Thera Maha Kassapa, with the support of King Ajatasatthu. At this assembly, the then known texts of the **Dhamma** and the **Vinaya** [*pañca nikāya* and *ubhato vinaya*] were determined and fixed to the best of their ability.[See Cullavagga Ch.XI.PTS Vinaya IV].

A hundred years later, during the reign of King Kalālāsoka, the second council was held, said to have been provoked by an apparent breakdown of the discipline of the Sangha. Ten disputed points of Vinaya or *dasavatthūni*, it is said, triggered off the great controversy. This signalled the **Big Break Away of the Sangha** from the orthodox congregation or the Theriya community. Until then, the Buddhist Sangha was a united, homogenous body. The Buddhist Vinaya, up to this point, shows a commonness and unanimity.

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Emperor Asoka - his patronage to the Sāsana and the dispatch of missions abroad.

Two more centuries later, by the time of Emperor Asoka, the need for a more power-packed third Buddhist council was felt. The disintegration of the Sāsana on account of variations in doctrinal interpretations was becoming a serious threat. Individual teachers were becoming **powerful interpreters of the Buddha vacana, divorced from the spirit of the Sutta and the Vinaya**, contrary to the directions given under the *Cattāro Mahāpadesā*.

An eminent Elder of the time, Moggaliputta Tissa Thera prevails upon the Emperor Asoka to convene a *saṅgīti* or Buddhist council. For more reasons than one, this assembly convened by Asoka is looked upon as the the *grand finale* in Buddhist church history. **Asoka** finalised and presented a standard version of the Tripitaka, with the **Kathāvatthupparakāraṇa** compiled by Moggaliputta Tissa Thera as the seventh and the last of the Abhidhamma books. Asoka is also said to have cleansed the Sāsana of the so-called misinterpreters of the Buddhavacana, upholding the Vibhajjavādins as the true interpreters of the Dhamma. The **Kathāvatthupparakāraṇa** is accepted as the authority on which this standardisation was done.

Thereafter, the Emperor decided that the time was ripe for the dispatch of Buddhist missions abroad. And Moggaliputta Tissa Thera, who presided at the third council, sent the following nine missions under the patronage of the Emperor.

1. Majjhantika [Madhyāndina] to Kashmīra and Gandhāra
2. Mahādeva Mahishamaṇḍala [a district South of Vindhya]
3. Rakkhita Vanavāsī [North Kanara]
4. Dhammarakkhita [Yonaka] Aparānta [territories of Gujarat, Kathiawar, Kacch and Sind]
5. Mahādhammarakkhita Mahārāṭṭha [the country of the Marāṭhī]
6. Majjhima Himavanta
7. Soṇa and Uttara Suvaṇṇabhūmi
8. Mahinda Tambapaṇṇi

The historicity and authenticity of these early missions mentioned in the Sri Lankan chronicles, Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa, is clearly established by several inscriptions [See Hazra - Theravada Buddhism in S.E. Asia, p. 39].

Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Something very remarkable about the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka

is that it was directly dispatched by Emperor Asoka to his unseen but closely linked friend Devānampiya Tissa, the king of Sri Lanka. The gift had a very high degree of prestige attached to it. It was graciously received in Sri Lanka. Further, the mission to Sri Lanka was headed by Asoka's own son Mahinda. Its prestige was further elevated by the arrival soon afterwards of Mahinda's own sister Saṅghamittā, who when she came here to initiate the admission of Sri Lankan women into the Buddhist Monastic Order, came also with a sapling of the sacred Bodhi Tree in India under which the Buddha had attained his full enlightenment.

Sri Lankan Reception to the arrival of the Indian Buddhist mission of Mahinda / Asoka.

Both warmth of friendship and religious exultation contributed to the tremendously reverberating success which Thera Mahinda's Buddhist mission received in Sri Lanka. Asoka is said to have sent his unseen friend in Sri Lanka not only the gift of the Dhamma through his own son Mahinda, but also all requisites needed for a second coronation of **Tissa as the king of the new Buddhist land**. The cordiality of all these events must have been overwhelming.

The Sri Lankan ruler, on meeting the royal guests, i.e. Thera Mahinda and his associates, invites them to the royal palace. But the Thera politely declines it, indicating that the stay in the Royal park would be more fitting for the monks. However, they were invited to the palace for meals the next day.

The visit of Thera Mahinda to Sri Lanka took place on an eventful day. It was a day of great festivity [*nakkhatta*] in the island. It is evident that Sri Lanka had a fairly well developed material culture by this time. Royal palaces, with even elephant stables within that complex, and well laid out parks in the city are known to have existed.

The Thera had already arrived at the hill top of Mihintalā. The king had ordered his people to enjoy themselves, taking part in water sports in the great lake Tisāveva in the city. He himself, with a select group, took to his favourite

deer hunt [*migavam*]. He apparently did not know that his friend Emperor Asoka in India, under the benign influence of Buddhism, **had already ordered a reduction in the slaughter of animals for the royal kitchen.**

In his chase after the fleeing deer, the king found himself quite unexpectedly in the presence of the Thera who was bringing from his Indian friend **the Buddhist mission of peace and good will and love to all living things.** What an irony of fate in history! A Buddhist missionary, sent by a head of state, catches red handed another head of state in the violent act of killing for personal pleasure. And the world calls this royal sport, whether it is a deer, a fox, a lion or a tiger that is hunted.

This encounter, we believe, is as it should have happened, to bring about meaningful changes in history through the intermediary of ruling personalities. More to follow.

Mahinda delivers his message of Buddhism - first to the Royal household.

Thera Mahinda based his first sermon to the Sri Lankans on the **Cullahatthipadopama Sutta.** It essentially sums up the glory of the Buddha and expounds the Buddhist way of religious life leading up to Nirvana, via the basic way of putting right the moral life of *sīla* at the very outset. Monastic life of *pabbajjā* comes up as an invariable adjunct of the path to Nirvana. It is a very uncompromising introduction to Buddhism as a way of religious life.

The new religion gains acceptance and popularity.

News of the arrival of Buddhism soon gets publicised and attendance at the Thera's preaching increases with rapidity. The common people appear to be attracted in very large numbers. The venue of activities had soon to be shifted from within the palace buildings to the elephant stables outside, to accommodate the incoming larger numbers.

The enthusiasm of women at these gatherings seems to be noticeably felt.

Even at the very first session within the palace, it was Princess Anula of the royal household, a cousin of the king, who opted to renounce her household life and join the Order of Buddhist Nuns. It is this request which led to the invitation of **Theri Saṅghamittā**, Thera Mahinda's sister from India, to perform the act of admission of women into the monastic order in Sri Lanka. It was on this trip that the world's monumental tree, the **Sri Mahā Bodhi** of Anuradhapura, was brought over here by her from Bodh Gaya in India.

These basic sermons were soon followed by **what appear to be popular teachings**. They were based on texts like the **Vimānavatthu** and the **Petavatthu**. Far from being rustic in spirit, they attempt to regulate the good lives of laymen, unhesitatingly disclosing the results that follow the good or bad lives lived here. Thus we discover that these early teachings brought home the message of Buddhism vibrantly, both to the monk and the layman.

Religious accessories - places of worship and monastic residences.

Thera Mahinda himself is said to have indicated the need of some memento to indicate the presence of the Buddha. Hence the erection of the first stupa, the **Thūpārāma**, enshrining the relics specially got down from India for the purpose. The Bodhi, latterly turned out to be even a greater attraction. Quite soon, seedlings from this original came to be distributed.

Thera Mahinda himself insisted that for a successful establishment of the Sāsana in the island, a person born of Sri Lankan parents should enter the monastic order, himself learn the dhamma and preach it in the land. That alone would lead to a true nativisation of the incoming religion.

Entry into the Sāsana of both men and women seems to have been popular. Monastic residences for both groups soon came to be established.



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King Devānampiya Tissa's engagement and involvement with Buddhism / Sri Lanka.

1. As the host to the royal mission sent by his friend Emperor Asoka from India, the king insisted that Thera Mahinda and his party of four theras, one samanera and a layman take up their residence in the royal pavilion of the Mahāmeghavana Park. On Mahinda's willingness, the king formally gifted it to the Sangha. This, more or less, marked the acceptance by the king of the custodianship of the Sāsana in the land.
2. Thereafter, it is said that the Thera, together with the king, set out to plan what would in course of time turn out to be **the bastion of Buddhism in Sri Lanka**. This is the beginning of the early monastic edifices in the city of Anuradhapura. These included a *sīmā mālaka* for the performance of ecclesiastical Acts of the Sangha, a tank with a room for warm baths, a *dāna-sālā* [a place where gifts of food offered to the Sangha could be collected and divided] or refectory, a place for the planting of the **Bodhi Tree** and a place for the building of the **Mahāthūpa** [in anticipation of an event which was to take place centuries later]. These obviously constituted the nucleus of what turned out to be in later centuries the great **Mahāvihāra** of international fame, the hub of Sri Lankan Buddhism.
3. In marking out the *sīmā* for monastic purposes, the king is supposed to have requested the Thera to make it expansive enough to include the city within it so that ' **the king may himself live within the area of authority of the Buddha** '.
4. It is not to be missed here that this request of the king is a clear indication of the **submission of the state to be under the benign influence of the religion** [of the Buddha].

5. More and more evidence of such involvement of the ruling house with the new religion comes with Anula as a sub-queen, along with her companions, expressing their desire to join the **Buddhist Monastic Order as nuns**. Awaiting Theri Saṅghamitta's arrival, they take up residence at Upāsikā vihāra which was newly built for them. Saṅghamittā ordained them after her arrival and she, together with them, lived in the enlarged Upāsikā-vihāra, under the new name of **Hatthālhaka-vihāra**.
6. The Bodhi Tree is planted with great pomp and ceremony, with **representatives from the north and south of the island participating at the event**. Being a mature branch of the parent tree in India, the new Bodhi Tree in Sri Lanka soon produced numerous seedlings. These seedlings too were sent to different and distant parts of the island - to the far north to the village of Tivakka Brāhmaṇa and to Kājaragāma in the far south [Kājaragāma] **as tokens of cultural harmony and alignment**. These events took place **as far back as the 3rd century B.C**. And our **records, at any rate, are not later than 5th century A.D.**
7. With the increase of the bhikkhu community, more and more monasteries like **Isurumuniya** and **Vessagiriya** came to be built. The building of the **Thūpārāma** dagoba as the first sthūpa in Anuradhapura, enshrining the Buddha's right collar bone, the **planting of the Bodhi Tree** and its seedlings subsequently in different parts of the island, and the **possession of the Buddha's bowl relic** by the ruler of the land, all these led to a feeling of the personal presence of the Buddha in the island,
8. **Mahinda Thera** having come here at the young age of 38 years, **lived up to the ripe old age of eighty and passed away in 200 B.C.** during the 8th year of King Uttiya, younger brother and successor of Devānaṃpiya Tissa. **Saṅghamitta Therī** died the following year.



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Sri Lanka provides one of the finest centres for the study of the impact of Buddhism on any country and a people at world level.

1. The dispatch of Buddhism to Sri Lanka during the reign of Asoka, said to be 236 years after the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha [around 247 B.C.], could be considered one of the most noteworthy events in the entire history of Buddhism. Together with Thailand and Myanmar, Sri Lanka is one of the three major countries where the earlier brand of Buddhism known as the **Theravāda** survives up-to-date as a living faith.
2. Sri Lanka also has a remarkable record, both archaeological as well as mythical and legendary [preserved in literature], regarding its proto-history, dating back to pre-historic pre-Buddhist times. These are not yet adequately researched into. But are bound to be very revealing and revolutionizing, when methodically and scientifically unraveled one day.
3. Like Korea and Japan of a much later date [nearly seven centuries], Sri Lanka had the unenviable inter-state relationship of mutual respect and good-will with India, prior to the dispatch of the gift of Buddhism.
4. The geographic situation of Sri Lanka on the highway of international sea routes from the east to the west and vice versa [in between the Far East with China and the Middle East with Africa, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq], and its location as an island, no more than twenty miles away from the southern tip of peninsular India of the Deccan, swung its fortunes both forwards and backwards throughout history.
5. We shall begin with the immediate pre-historic background of Sri Lanka. Three names are associated with it from fairly early times. They make very

colourful prints on legendary fabrics. One is **Tambapaṇṇi**. This is supposed to have originated by the discovery by some of the early settlers that its beaches had **copper-coloured sand**. The next is **Sinhala** [rendered into Chinese by the Chinese monk Fa Hsien as **Seng Chia Lo**. He gives its meaning as the **Land of the Lion People = Shih tse Kuo**]. The word **Lanka** also dates back to fairly early times.

6. As a rule, almost all pre-historic Sri Lankan legends dare not venture to proceed to a time point beyond the historical Buddha Gotama. { They do speak of Sri Lanka in association with the Buddhas of the previous time epochs, i.e. remote past.}
7. Aware of these residual elements of pre-historic legends about primitive tribes, etc. these legends endeavor to blend them all within a time period covered by the historical Buddha Gotama himself.
8. Whether historically established as proved or not, the Sri Lankan Chronicles consistently record that the Buddha made three visits to Sri Lanka, very early after his enlightenment. All events connected with these visits, we believe, are narrated with more legend in them than history. And this manner of narration, we also believe, is for a special reason.
9. The time period from the enlightenment of the Buddha to his final passing away into *parinirvāṇa* is only fortyfive years. But the Chroniclers seem to pack into this very limited period an incredible amount of anthropological history. During his first visit to the island, to a more northern outpost known as Mahiyangana, he is said to have encountered there a very primitive component of humans who appear to belong to a pre-fire-discovery period in human history.
10. Two things are vividly described about them. 1. They apparently had not mastered the creation and use of fire at that time, for they are referred to as '**raw-meat-eaters**' or *lohita-bhakkhā*. 2. They are also said to have been

scared at the sight of fire which the Buddha is said to have strategically emanated from the seat on which he sat. Highlighting, as it were, the very backwardness of the culture of these primitive people, the Buddha is said to have hinted at, according the Mahavamsa, that Buddhism could not be introduced into their midst. The Buddha is said to have anticipated a wave of new immigrants. In other words, the presence of the **Yakkhas** was unacceptable [*Yakkhā nibbāsiyā idha* Mhv.].

11. But within 236 years after the passing away of the Buddha, Buddhism came to be introduced to Sri Lanka. It was received in Sri Lanka with an incredibly warm welcome. It took root very speedily and very successfully. Sri Lanka was ready for its reception.



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Introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka and the Status of Women

On the second day after arrival in Sri Lanka, we are told that the Thera Mahinda was invited to the palace by the king. Adikaram reports. p.51ff.

"The king served the theras with dainty dishes and calling upon the five hundred ladies, with Anuladevī at their head, to make obeisance to the theras, himself took is seat on a side. After the meal was over, Mahinda preached the Petvavatthu, Vimānavatthu and Saccasamyutta [SN.V. 414-478] to the people assembled including the king. Hearing this discourse, **the five hundred ladies attained the fruition of the First Path.** i.e. unshakable conviction in the new religion.

"The people who saw the theras at he Missakapabbata on the previous day, **conveyed the news to their neighbours** and this **resulted in a vast multitude of**

people assembling at the gate of the palace [Smp.I.80]. But as they had no opportunity to see the theeras the people raised a cry. The king learning what they desired, ordered the hall of the state elephant to be decorated, and prepared to receive the theeras. Mahinda went there and preached the Devadūta Suttanta. At the end of the discourse one thousand beings attained the Fruition of the First Path...

"From the facility with which Mahina and people of Ceylon [Sri Lanka] understood one another, we may incidentally observe **how closely allied the languages in Ceylon and North India at that time must have been**. A comparison of the earliest inscriptions of Ceylon and those of North India in the corresponding age leads one to the same inference. " [A remarkable religo-cultural alignment between North India and Sri Lanka, inspite of the vast Dravidian block of the Deccan in between.]

At p.55 " The king's sister-in-law, Anula, who had already become a Sotāpanna was desirous of joining the Order of Buddhist nuns. Mahinda could not confer pabbajjā on her as, according to the Vinaya, that could be done only by a bhikkhunī. Mahinda, therefore, asked the king to send a messenger to his sister Sanghamittā to come over to Ceylon and establish the bhikkhunī sāsaṇa [Smp.I.90].

Pabbajjā- aspirant women of Sri Lanka, **headed by the court ladies**, seem to have been **held in high esteem by the state on the whole**. The king provided for them a special place of residence - Upāsikāvihāra - wherein, observing the *dasa sīlāni*, they awaited the arrival of Sanghamittā [Smp. I. 91]. Sanghamittā was accompanied by a **large number of nuns from India**, some of them **were young** - *daharā bhikkhuniyo*. All these **bhikkhunis taught Vinaya and Dhamma at Anuradhapura**. Several more nunneries were built during Sanghamitta's life time.

***It is also worth noting here that Devanampiya Tissa himself had a vihara built at Jambukolapaṭṭana in the far North and the Tissamahārāma vihāra in the

far South. Such royal patronage would have contributed to the rapid growth and spread of the Sāsana in the South. It is therefore not surprising when it is said that large numbers of *bhikkhunis* from the Rohana would go and preach the Vinaya in Anuradhapura. It is also said that during the inauguration ceremony of the Mirisavatiyabuilt built by Dutugemunu there were thousands of *bhikkhunis* who participated at that [Adikaram. p. 63]. All this development within a period of less than two hundred years.



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The Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and its vicissitudes in the new land of adoption.

1. The 3rd century B.C. witnessed the official **introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka** during the reign of King Devānampiya Tissa. This was directly the outcome of the **royal religious missions sent out to the world by Emperor Asoka**. It is remarkable that this happened within a period of two hundred years of the appearance of this **world winning [not world conquering]** religion of the Buddha.

This act embraced the west, south and the east [and even the north like Central Asia and Mongolia in due course] of the homeland of Buddhism. The conversion of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Persia in the west to Buddhism resulted from this. Suvannabhumi in the east, covering the territories of present day Myanmar and Thailand seems to have had the impact of the Asokan missionaries, Theras Sona and Uttara.

2. We in Sri Lanka have the best records of the impact of Buddhism through Asokan mission on any country. Sri Lanka Chronicles like the **Dīpavaṃsa** and the **Mahāvāṃsa** [5th century A.D. and perhaps a little earlier] give us a

continuous history of origin of the religion, its introduction to the island and its subsequent stories of success and failure [admittedly embellished at times for the joy and edification of their Buddhist readers.]. The original compiler of the Mahāvamsa was a Buddhist monk by the name of Mahānāma, and the work unmistakably claims to be a National History. It is proven more and more that there is a great deal of credibility in the historical evidence provided by the Mahāvamsa. Most Russian archaeologists believe that what the **Mahāvamsa** says about Asian Buddhist events in pre-Christian era are very reliable and accurate.

3. The Pali Buddhist Commentaries, specially the Vinaya Commentary **Samantapāsādikā**, also provide their own monastic versions about the history of the island. These often show greater antiquity and untampered authenticity. They of course do have their special points of emphasis and that for their own valid reasons. A special study of the **Mahāvamsa** and the **Samantapāsādikā** on the specific issue of **Duṭṭhagāmani's** war with the Tamil ruler **Elāra** of Anuradhapura is particularly interesting. This has to be a special area of historical studies. [Read Professor Jotiya Dhirasekera's article on Dutugemunu Episode Re-examined.]
4. There are two clearly discernible phases of growth and development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in pre-Christian times. Denampiya Tissa's Sri Lanka, at the time of the introduction of Buddhism, had an agriculturally engaged community with a vast extent of land available for cultivation, and therefore with a reasonably large amount of leisure in their hands. Apparently there was no menacing density of population. Hence also no aggressive competition for living and survival. Special days of festivity, like the full-moon day of June was a declared holiday, both for the rulers and the ruled. That is why Tissa ordered the people to take to water-sport while he went on the deer hunt. People had obviously acquired a taste for the good and the beautiful in life. They only needed trust-worthy guidance. Thera Mahinda's sermons dealing

with the good lives of humans in the Peta and Vimāna Vatthus and Devadūta and Bālapaṇḍita Suttas [and not mere ghost stories as some would imagine] would have opened out a new vista of enriched human life, here and now. Ladies like Anula and her maids, undoubtedly saw even beyond. Buddhism had to grow vigorously on this soil.



History of Buddhism in South and South East Asia

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

2001 - Question Paper - Three hours Answer Five questions only.

1. Study briefly the impact of the Buddhist missions of Asoka [3rd century B.C.], on Asia, accounting for their success and failure, in the regions of east, west, north and south. Adduce historical evidence, both literary and archaeological, in support of what you say, bravely examining even the myths and the legends.
2. Pre-historic Sri Lanka evidently provides an interesting field for the study of primitive man. Write a brief note on pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka, making use of the legendary narratives of the Sri Lankan Chronicles.
3. "The warmth of reception and the sincerity of acceptance with which Buddhism was hailed in Sri Lanka, both by the rulers and the ruled, finds no parallel elsewhere in the Buddhist world." Discuss.
4. It is more than impressive to detect Devanampiya Tissa's conviction that "**Religion should form an integral part of Statecraft**", in requesting Thera Mahinda to **enlarge the limits of the *Sīmā* to include his area of residence**. Discuss Tissa's state policy as a convert to the new religion. Trace the continuance of his policy in later history.

5. Discuss the Canonical justification of the subject matter of Thera Mahinda's discourses within the first few days of his arrival in Sri Lanka.
6. What literary evidence can you adduce in favour of a historical justification of Dutugemunu's war [a war of liberation from the menace of non-Buddhist invaders from neighbouring South India] in the 1st century B.C.?
7. Sanghamittā Therī on the one hand and Anulā Devī on the other were very exemplary in the successful founding of the Bhikkhuni Sāsana in Sri Lanka. Highlight their individual roles and a few points of its success up to the time Duṭṭhagāmanī.
8. The internal political feuds among the rulers of the land and the resultant division of the '**monk power**' in the country on those lines led to the crack up of the Mahāvihāra fraternity and its exposure to deviationist new Buddhist thinking that was developing in India at the time. Discuss.

